

# Patient Patient

With **MICHAEL BUSH**

*Alliance for Gout Awareness Patient Advocate*



## **When were you diagnosed with gout?**

As with many other patients, it was a years-long process. My first foot flare was misdiagnosed in the emergency room as a swollen bug bite. I took Benadryl and, over the years, tried other at-home remedies for swelling.

My primary care provider thought a particularly severe attack in my foot could be a bone fracture, so he sent me to a podiatrist. It was the podiatrist who finally diagnosed me with gout. He gave me a few tips and referred me to a rheumatologist.

Ironically, the rheumatologist's office is across the hall from my primary care provider. I can only laugh at the thought of how different my life would have been if I'd just walked across the hall years earlier.

Increasing awareness about gout among the public and providers can help shorten the time it takes to get an accurate diagnosis.

## **What was your experience like working with a gout specialist?**

The rheumatologist was very knowledgeable. He helped me understand the disease and how it affected my body. He let me know that gout would “migrate” to areas of prior injury. I'd previously hurt my back and my ankle, for example, and those joints would swell from gout.

In addition to helping me understand the disease, the rheumatologist prescribed medication, including an infused treatment, to get my uric acid level within normal range.

## **Q In addition to medication, what has helped you manage your gout?**

In my experience, diet played a major role. The rheumatologist recommended some lifestyle changes to help me lose weight, which set me on the right path. Once I shedded a few pounds, I was motivated to lose more.

I started working with a nutritionist too, which has also been very educational. I switched to a plant-based diet earlier this year and I've never felt better. I've lost 50 pounds in a healthy way.

## **Q What's the status of your gout today?**

It's very well managed, but it will always be part of me. I like to say it whispers to me now, but it's not screaming at me like it used to.

And now that it's under control, I don't miss days of work like I used to. After 45 years as an independent grocer, I found a second

career as a craftsman. For the first time in decades, I can walk around a job site and work with my hands without trouble.

I also love getting down on the floor to play with my grandkids – that's never been easier.

## **Q What would you tell people struggling to get their gout under control?**

Get yourself a good gout specialist who will support you. I'm thankful for my rheumatologist, who appealed to my insurance company until they agreed to cover the infused treatment I needed.

Also, don't discount the power of dietary changes. They can make a difference too.

Finally, building a community of support can help. Don't be embarrassed to ask friends and family to help you during an attack – or to be your partner in committing to a new lifestyle change that can improve your health.

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